

BA 1261

8/78

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

Reisterstown, Maryland

Public Access

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, the denomination reflecting the Germanic background of Reisterstown's earliest inhabitants, is an example of early twentieth century American Gothic-revival, based on medieval European styles but original in composition.

## INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church 1905

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER 109 Main Street

6th

CITY, TOWN

Reisterstown

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Baltimore County

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☒ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

Telephone #: 833-1604

STREET &amp; NUMBER

c/o Rev. Dixon Yaste

117 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Reisterstown

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code  
Maryland 21136**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Baltimore County

Liber #: 4904

Folio #: 243

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Towson

STATE  
Maryland 21204**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH is a brick Gothic-revival church dating from 1905. Basically cruciform in shape, its three-bay nave faces Main Street to the west; symmetrical one-bay transepts extend north and south; an additional smaller south transept, two bays in length is west of the principal south transept, originally serving as a Sunday School classroom, now a large vestibule from the parish house (111-113 Main Street; q.v.). A small square tower with the original principal entrance rises from the intersection of the nave and the north transept. The shallow chancel, forming the head of the cross, is narrower and lower than the nave and transepts.

Windows all have pointed arched heads. The central windows in the ends of the nave and transepts are wider, with wooden tracery forming three lancets beneath a large quatrefoil in the arch. Wide single lancet windows flank the larger windows in the transepts, and similar windows are in the side walls of nave and transepts. A rose window is at the peak of each gable. All windows are filled with opalescent stained glass. Pointed arched entrances are in the west and north faces of the tower and a rose window is above each in the tower's second storey, above the church cornice. A belfry is in the third storey with an open pointed arch in each side of the tower. The tower roof is flat; the walls extend above it only at the corners forming a wide crenel on each side.

Above a foundation of uncorased ashlar white marble, the walls of pressed brick are laid in common bond without headers. The smaller arches are formed of three rowlock courses, the larger, four. Keystones are rock-faced white marble. Above wide wooden eave and rake cornices, the latter above returns, the steep roofs are covered with slate.

Internally the principal transepts, each wider than the nave, form the main seating area and the curved oak pews are arranged on either side of a central aisle. A deep balcony is above most of the nave. The ceilings of the transepts and the crossing is plastered, its form following the rafters to the collar beam, thence flat. Above the nave balcony the ceiling is open to expose a simple king-post truss. Behind the altar is an elaborate tripartite reredos of carved oak formed in three steep gables with tall cusped pinnacles. The flanking lectern and pulpit are all of oak, embellished with Gothic arches and other motifs.

Each window has a major picture rendered in opalescent glass:

north transept -- "Come Unto Me"

south transept -- the Good Shepherd

nave -- Christ with the little children

the small window above the altar--Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane

the lancets -- various Christian symbols or saints

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) local history	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1906-1907

BUILDER/ARCHITECT G. Walter Tovell builder

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH is one of the principal churches of the community, the denomination reflecting the Germanic background of its earliest inhabitants. This structure is characteristic of American Gothic-revival late in the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth. Its forms and motifs based on medieval European examples, ~~but~~ original in composition, not an exact copy of a specific period in the medieval era, nor of an exact region.

Wherever the German people settled, of prime consideration was a church and school. Lutheran or Reformed, erection of a log church followed closely upon shelter for the populace. In keeping with this custom, in 1764 John Reister obtained by patent three-quarters of an acre of land, adjoining his original grant, which he called "Church Hill" (BC Patents, Cert. No. 1069). The name of the tract indicates the purpose for which the land was intended, and a log meeting house was subsequently built in the northeast corner of the lot, on the south side of what is now Cockeys Mill Road near the Conewago Road (Marks, Reister's Desire, p. 9). However, Harold Redcay in his account of Lutheranism in Reisters Town, failed to turn up any evidence that there was a Lutheran pastor or, for that matter, whether there was a congregation of any sort in the early days of the town. The tract of land was used as a burial ground mostly. Dr. Dickson wrote: "We have been told that the Church of England had power to levy a certain tax upon the people in this county, and if they did not attend to the matter the graveyards were immediately closed against their dead. Now all those, who dissented from the church, came to the conclusion to construct a burying ground for themselves and the public in general." (Dickson, Forward) The log structure mentioned above suffered from disuse and was eventually torn down in 1854. (Redcay, p. 8) Mrs. Marks reports that as late as 1821, by an Act of the General Assembly of Maryland Isaac Dickson, William Berryman, George Fisher, Jr, John Beckley, Samuel Harryman, and Philip Reister, Jr. were named a corporate board of the "High German Lutheran Church in Reisters Town" (BC Deeds WG 174/1824:266). Most of the membership, by this time had probably been absorbed by St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Arcadia anyway (Marks, p. 10).

This history of the Trinity Church begins in earnest in 1855 when John Gies, Sr. and Lewis Tritle decided to organize a congregation in the village. This group began to look for a site in which to hold services and the Odd Fellows Hall was chosen and used for the next 11 years as the Lutheran congregation gathered strength.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

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8 Significance continued

The first church building was erected on the present site c 1868. The land had been donated to the church by Jacob S. Forney, a prosperous tavern keeper in the town. The land had been conveyed in 1804 to Daniel Forney, Jacob's father, by Philip Moore. The land was on the east side of the turnpike, adjoined Forney's extensive land holdings and contained 29 perches of land. In 1868, then, Jacob Forney donated the land to the trustees of the English Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Reisterstown. (EHA 58/222) This building served the congregation until the turn of the century. The present structure was first proposed in 1897 as many repairs were needed on the old church. Decision to build a new, however, did not come until 1905.

When Jacob Forney died in 1882, the trustees of the church moved to add some land to the church property. In November of 1883 they purchased acreage at the north side and a 70' x 90' lot to the east of the church from the Forney estate. (WMI 139/275)

When the decision was finally made to raze the old church building and erect a new one, things moved quickly. The building contract went to G. Walter Tovell on April 23, 1906. The cornerstone was laid in August and the church was dedicated in July of 1907. The structure was hailed near and far as being a beautiful one. Of special pride to the congregation were the windows of opalescent glass. These were purchased from the Thomas Wightman Glass Company in Pittsburg. The owner of the firm had a son who had married Miss Susan Russell, of the prominent Reisterstown family. As there was personal interest involved, no lengths were spared to provide the church with the best. The artist who did the windows was from Germany and the glass colors came from Europe. (Redcay, p.41)

The church edifice has stayed relatively untouched since its erection, although in 1924 the inside was considerably altered in order to install a new pipe organ.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Land Records, Baltimore County Courthouse, Towson, Md  
 Lillian B. Marks, Reisters Desire (Baltimore, 1975)

Harold W. Redcay, Lutheranism in Reisterstown, Baltimore County Maryland,  
 1764-1855 (Reistersotwn, 1955)

Isaac N. Dickson, Early Days of Reisterstown and Vicinity (Reisterstown  
 CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY Kiwanis Club, 1947)

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION****LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES**

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

James T. Wollon, Jr A.I.A. and

NAME / TITLE

Oscar Staley, Volunteer HRI

Cornelia M. Ives, Project Coordinator

August 1978

DATE

ORGANIZATION

Historic Reisterstown, Inc

STREET &amp; NUMBER

430 Main Street

TELEPHONE

833-3078 (ms. Ives)

CITY OR TOWN

Reisterstown, Md

STATE

21136

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
 The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
 (301) 267-1438



BA 1261

Trinity Evan. Lutheran Church  
109 Main St - Reisterstown

Robert Dasch

8-78

West.